

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 4434

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GR

SUBJECT: PANAGOULIS CONTINUES TO PREOCCUPY GREEKS

REF: ATHENS 4262

1. SUMMARY. DEPUTY PANAGOULIS HAS BEEN BURIED SPECTACULARLY. THE IDEA THAT HE WAS ASSASSINATED IS BEING CAREFULLY NOURISHED BY THE OPPOSITION PRESS. BUT ATTENTION IS RAPIDLY SHIFTING TO THE JUNTA MILITARY POLICE DOCUMENTS HE REPORTEDLY HAD IN HIS POSSESSION, WHICH HAVE SINCE DISAPPEARED, AND WHICH ARE PURPORTED BY SOME TO BE DAMAGING TO MANY ACTIVE POLITICIANS. END SUMMARY.

2. THE MAY 5 FUNERAL OF ALEXANDER PANAGOULIS BROUGHT SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSAND ATHENIANS INTO THE STREETS TO LINE THE ROUTE OF THE CORTEGE. THERE WAS SOME SHOUTING BY ORGANIZED CLAQUES OF ANTI-AMERICAN (AMERICANS OUT OF GREECE) AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT SLOGANS. ANDREAS PAPANDREOU AND THE COMMUNIST LEFT ARE CLAIMING THAT THE MASSIVE TURNOUT REFLECTS A POPULAR DEMAND FOR CLOSURE OF AMERICAN BASES, RAPID DEJUNTAIZATION, AND INDEPENDENCE FOR GREECE--IN SHORT THAT THE FUNERAL POSSESSION WAS AN ANTI-AMERICAN, ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATION.

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3. WE DOUBT THAT ASSESSMENT. WHILE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON INSIDE THE HEADS OF THE CROWD--MOST OF THEM UNDER THE AGE OF 35 AND ALMOST ALL DRESSED IN BLUE JEANS--IT SEEMS MORE LIKELY THAT THEY WERE COMMEMORATING THE LOSS OF A MAN WHO HAD ALMOST UNIQUELY AMONG GREEKS RESISTED THE MILITARY JUNTA. PANAGOULIS WAS A SYMBOL OF GREEK RESISTANCE, TO A POPULATION THAT LARGELY DID NOTHING TO RESIST THE COLONELS. IN THIS SENSE, THE MASSIVE PARTICIPATION WAS A REPEAT OF ONE ASPECT OF THE MASSIVE MARCH ON THE EMBASSY LAST NOVEMBER--AN EX-POST FACTO EXPIATION OF THE GUILT MANY GREEKS FEEL FOR THEIR FAILURE -- OR THEIR FATHERS' FAILURE--TO OPPOSE SEVEN YEARS OF MILITARY DICTATORSHIP.

4. IT IS ALSO WELL TO NOTE THAT WHATEVER THE COUNT OF THE CROWD, MOST ATHENIANS WERE NOT THERE. ANDREAS AND THOSE WHO SEEK TO TAKE THE PULSE OF GREECE BY COUNTING DEMONSTRATORS LOSE SIGHT OF THIS SIMPLE FACT.

5. SIMULTANEOUSLY, THE EFFORTS BY THE OPPOSITION PRESS TO SUSTAIN THE ARGUMENT THAT THE UNFORTUNATE PANAGOULIS WAS THE VICTIM OF AN ASSASSINATION CONTINUE. SPECULATION NOW FOCUSES ON A PHANTOM "THIRD CAR." AND THE PANAGOULIS FAMILY IS PERSEVERING IN ITS ATTEMPTS BEFORE THE COURTS TO HAVE THE DEATH ESTABLISHED AS MURDER. ON THE OTHER HAND, ANDREAS AND THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP OF THE OPPOSITION SEEM TO HAVE PULLED BACK FROM CRYING MURDER. NEVERTHELESS, AND DESPITE THE MASSIVE EVIDENCE TO THE CONTRARY, THE "MURDER" THEORY IS VERY MUCH ALIVE IN THE PUBLIC MIND HERE, AND ALMOST CERTAINLY WILL BECOME AN ARTICLE OF FAITH FOR AT LEAST A MINORITY OF GREEKS.

6. CURRENTLY, ATTENTION IS NOT SWITCHING TO WHAT EXACTLY PANAGOULIS KNEW--AND WHOM HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO INCRIMINATE FOR "COLLABORATION" WITH THE JUNTA. THERE SEEMS TO BE GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT HE DID IN FACT HAVE OLD MILITARY POLICE (ESA/EAT) FILES. SO MUCH SO, THAT PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS HAS PERSONALLY INJECTED HIMSELF IN THE TANGLE FOR THE FIRST TIME. ON MAY 6 HE CALLED FOR "THOSE IN

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POSSESSION" OF THE FILES TO TURN THEM OVER TO THE PRESIDENT OF PARLIAMENT, WHO THEN WOULD MAKE THEM AVAILABLE TO ALL PARTIES. THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE FOLLOWED AND REFINED THIS STATEMENT WITH AN ANNOUNCEMENT EXEMPTING FROM PROSECUTION ANYBODY WHO COMES FORWARD TO THE PRESIDENT OF PARLIAMENT, WITH THE ESA DOCUMENTS, DURING THE PERIOD MAY 7-17. THE PRESIDENT OF THE PARLIAMENT TOGETHER WITH PARTY LEADERS "WILL DETERMINE THE PROCEDURES FOR CHECKING THESE DOCUMENTS."

THE STATEMENT ALSO PROMISED FULL PROSECUTION OF ANYBODY WHO FAILS TO COME FORWARD OR, IN EFFECT, WHO PUBLISHES INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THEM.

7. IN REPLY TO THE FOREGOING, BOTH GEORGE MAVROS AND ANDREAS PAPANDREOU HAVE CALLED UPON THE GOVERNMENT NOT MERELY TO EXAMINE THE ESA FILES, BUT TO FINALLY OPEN THE LONG-DELAYED CYPRUS TRIAL. THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE INTERIOR HAS TAKEN A SIMILAR POSITION. THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE EXTERIOR HAS NOT SAID ANYTHING. IN FACT, OF ALL THE OPPOSITION, THE EXTERIOR PARTY HAS BEEN BY FAR THE MOST RESTRAINED THROUGHOUT THE PANAGOULIS AFFAIR, NEVER ECHOING THE HYSTERIA OF THE PRESS OR THE REST OF THE OPPOSITION. IT WOULD ALMOST SEEM THAT THE EXTERIOR, PERHAPS WITH A LONGER MEMORY THAN OTHERS HERE AND A MORE ACUTE SENSE OF ITS OWN IMMEDIATE INTERESTS, IS PURPOSEFULLY ESCHEWING THE KIND OF ACTIONS THAT IN THE PAST HAVE PROVOKED SHARP REACTION FROM THE GREEK RIGHT.
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